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867 immediately upon their return home revert to the practice ac-
579 quired in childhood -- stealing. This is of course not the fault of the school or of secondary education, but of the traditional views on this "trade," contact with which kills every other way of looking at it, as the lone wheat-stalk is smothered among the weeds that surround it.

579 In his stealing, the Abkhaz is treacherous. The best of friends, to all appearances, do not hesitate to steal from each other, and in Abkhazia it is no rare thing for brother to steal from brother, father from son, or son from father. It is almost proverbial that when an Abkhaz has no one to steal from, he robs himself. There have been instances of an Abkhaz stealing a horse from a neighbor on a dark night, taking it miles and miles away and exchanging it for another, riding back home on this fresh horse the same night, and the next morning, the minute his neighbor raised the alarm, rushing over and being the first to offer his sympathy and joining the chorus of people calling down curses on the thief and dashing off with the others in frenzied pursuit.

685 The Abkhaz thief will not admit his crime, even /11/ when
579 he could be convicted on the evidence of witnesses. When a
692 robbery case is tried at village meetings, a decision of the judge in favor of the accused is not infrequently influenced by the audacity of the latter's pretexts, by his shameless subterfuges, and by his so-called "talking circles around them." In general at such
[537] meetings, any exhibition of sly rhetoric, however shameless, on the part of a notorious thief finds not only attentive listeners but even admirers. "He saved himself by the bravery of his speech," they say in such cases.

And though such "eloquence" on the part of the thief often saves the guilty one from punishment, the ~~fictum~~ factum, understandably, does not believe in his innocence and tries to get back at him at the proper moment for his losses, according to the formula of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

682 At present vengeance for spilled blood is on the wane, but at one time it was one of the most important features of Abkhaz life. The custom of blood-revenge puts the relatives of a person

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682 killed under the obligation of killing either the murderer or one of the latter's relatives. A blood-feud passes from generation to generation and is a person's sacred duty; unavenged blood is considered a shame and a disgrace for the living relatives of the person killed. The Abkhaz believe that if for some reason or other blood remains unavenged, it will avenge itself.

[628] In case the killer himself managed to escape, a relative of his was held responsible; he was killed, captured, or robbed and finally ruined. Even the killing of the meanest slave often led to clashes involving whole villages; if a mutual understanding and peace were not restored among them, the result of such a feud would be that one of the villages had to face ruin or move away to another place.

682 In blood-feuds the descent of the persons involved played
565 an important role. If, for instance, a prince killed a peasant, the relatives of the latter had no right to avenge the blood of the killed upon the killer, for "the blood of a peasant is not equal to that of a prince." Therefore, instead of the prince himself, [608] it was his foster father who had to pay for the blood shed by the prince.

There were different settlements for the blood of a peasant, a nobleman, or a prince.

Although the personal qualities of a man commanded [12/ special attention in Abkhazia the blood of a peasant was nevertheless valued lower than the blood of a nobleman, and that of the latter lower than the blood of a prince. For instance, if the blood of a peasant was valued at five human souls, then the blood of a nobleman was worth three times more, and that of a prince five times more than the blood of a peasant. The price [435] of a life was determined in terms of spans /pyad'/. A soul (person) four spans tall was valued at 30 cows or 30 rubles in silver; one of five spans, 50 cows or 50 silver rubles; and one of six spans, 70 cows or 70 rubles in silver. Arms and clothing were added as supplementary payment. Blood was paid off with cows, goats, sheep, and beehives. The number of the latter was determined on the basis of the value of a cow.

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426 If the blood-price was not paid within a certain period, then at the end of the year, in place of a debt of four spans, five were owed, in place of five, six, and six became seven, so that an already considerable debt increased still more and weighed like a heavy burden on the shoulders of the debtor. But the Abkhaz had one excellent custom -- that of coming to the aid of an insolvent debtor. All the latter had to do was to announce that he "owed for blood," and everybody contributed his mite to pay off the debt.

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608 The following ceremony was considered the best way to a complete reconciliation of the parties involved in a blood-feud. A relative of the killer gave a banquet and, through intermediaries, invited the claimant of blood himself or his son. It was sufficient to persuade the claimant of blood to touch his lips to the breast of the wife or mother of the debtor, and, as a result of this action alone, everlasting and indissoluble peace would be restored between them. If, on the other hand, the blood-avenger would not be appeased and would not come to the feast, then those acting for the other side endeavored to abduct the son or some other close relative of the claimant or in some other way get such a person into their house. If they succeeded, then peace was restored whether the avenger liked it or not, for to kill the foster father was considered a violation and desecration of the "breast" and beneath the dignity of a brave man. Love of homeland is developed to the highest degree in the Abkhaz. Some peoples say, ubi bene, ibi patria, but the Abkhaz, on the other hand, prays: "There is no better place in the world than Abkhazia. God, save Abkhazia." In both grief and happiness alike, the Abkhaz repeats this prayer.

574 As is the case with all ancient peoples, hospitality is piously honored and maintained in Abkhazia. The Abkhaz is convinced that every guest is accompanied by seven "baraka" (blessing, /13/ bliss, abundance), one of which remains with the host, and God gives back to the guest this seventh baraka. Even the poorest Abkhaz does his utmost to treat his guest as well as possible; when an Abkhaz sees a traveler going along the village